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The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
KATHLEEN
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NEWS-LETTER

WESTERN UNION
WILLIAM TEMPLE COLLEGE
HENDRIK KRAEMER

SUPPLEMENT

BETWEEN YESTERDAY AND TO-MORROW
BY
JOSEF L. HROMADKA

THE ALBERT HALL was filled to capacity (there is a curious lack of unanimity on any figure for Albert Hall "capacity") on Sunday, April 25th, for a meeting which was intended to be, in the words of its promoters, the inauguration of a "campaign to build up the Western Union of European Nations on Christian lines, and to give spiritual energy and courage to the peoples of the world to face their present difficulties". Lord Halifax chaired the meeting and eleven speakers from Germany, Holland, Sweden, France, Belgium and Italy in so-called six-minute speeches made their pleas for Christian support of the union of Western Europe. Many Christian people are looking for a way of expressing their faith in action and are glad to link up with others with similar ideas. The success of the Oxford "Christian Action" meetings are an example of such a need. In the minds of at least some of the promoters the Albert Hall meeting was a larger edition of the Oxford meetings. No doubt there were many in that hall who as Christians were smitten in their consciences as they listened to men who had risked their lives and endured years of imprisonment in the struggle to preserve human freedom and decency against unbridled political forces, and compared these achievements with their own. As Lord Halifax reminded his audience, Christians have their share in the

responsibility for the present condition of the world in their own past failure to live in the public sphere what they professed in the private.

But it is scarcely possible to believe that *The Times* would devote the first leader as it did on Saturday, April 24th, and the rest of the press a substantial space to publicizing and reporting this meeting, if it were an affair internal to the Church, a self-examination by Christians of their past failure and their future duty. That element was present, but it was not the only thing that was present.

A Western Union has been founded and the political machinery for it has been set up. But the Union needs power, driving force, cohesion, something which will evoke sacrifice. That something might have been faith in the democratic ideal, but the very word "democracy" has suffered such a debasement and is surrounded by such ambiguities that it hardly meets the need. So perhaps—one can see how the argument runs—Christianity will meet the case rather better, for nobody can deny that it belongs to the past of the sixteen nations and helped to hold them together in a single cultural tradition when language and economic and political interests held them apart. When nations are, or feel themselves to be in danger either from within or without there is an instinctive looking back to the past, to those things which symbolized unity: even the Russian communists did this at the height of the war. That means that the element which many people are likely, perhaps unconsciously, to stress in Christianity is not its rightness and truth but its antiquity, the fact that it seems to be a solid remaining landmark in a shifting world. The danger of this is that each man looks back to some time when what he knows as Christianity was in its heyday—to the middle ages, to the Reformers, to the time when the Bible was universally read and *was* the culture of millions of people, to the time of the evangelical revival—and looking back he emphasizes the eirenic qualities in Christianity and forgets that in Europe Christianity has been not only a culture-making but a culture-breaking force, dividing Europe time and again like a sword, and therefore capable and rightly

capable of being a sword in the heart of Western Union. That is one danger, the danger of distortion by looking back to a distorted picture of the past.

The other danger comes from the present, from the difficulty of associating Christianity and Western Union without developing the *contra mundum* mind. André Philip saw this clearly when at the Albert Hall he said he wished this had been not a meeting to support Western Union but a meeting to support all men anywhere whose view of politics was that politics and the state exist to serve the upbuilding of the soul of the individual man in freedom and responsibility, over against any who, in any class and under any label make men's souls a means to an end.

Those who see most clearly the danger of Christians being whistled up to provide some moral fervour to make Western Union work may be tempted to give this sort of thing a very wide berth. If they do they will be running away from one of the challenges of the hour. The Albert Hall meeting was saved not by what the speakers said but by what they were. Everyone of them was, or had been deeply immersed in politics and public affairs, the realm of political ambiguities, compromises, second bests, and this saved the meeting from that woolly idealism which makes the thoughtful non-Christian so impatient with the public utterances of many Christians. If the Albert Hall meeting made a few hundred Christians more aware of the importance and difficulty of political action, and more determined to act while there is yet time, it was worth while.

WILLIAM TEMPLE COLLEGE

On April 25th the Archbishop of Canterbury broadcast in the Week's Good Cause, an appeal for the William Temple College, the official memorial of the Church of England to William Temple.

William Temple's interests were so wide and varied that the choice of a memorial to him cannot have been easy. But many thousands of people who had never heard of his theological and philosophical writings or of his lasting interest in education or his work for the ecumenical movement, knew his ceaseless concern for the under-privileged

and dispossessed and respected the courage, even if they did not always agree with the content, of his utterances on social and economic matters. His little Penguin book, *Christianity and the Social Order*, contains some of his very best writing. He certainly saw very clearly the changes which were coming both in industry and in the state, and the opportunities, as well as the difficulties, which these changes made for the Churches. The tendency both of the state and of modern large scale industry has been to assume on behalf of citizens and workers, usually under the heading of " welfare ", what are at heart largely *pastoral* functions. As has been previously said in the C.N-L. a very large proportion of these posts are filled by women.

The William Temple College was founded in the belief that the Church of England should make more provision for the theological education of women—both for those who might serve directly under Church auspices and for those who might enter the social services or industry. The Church of England has twenty-five large colleges for the training of school teachers. It is a forward-looking policy also to have a college primarily for social workers, whose influence in society may be as great as that of teachers and whose need for equipment not only in technical skill but in Christian fundamentals is just as urgent.

The college opened last October. The original plan, formed before William Temple's death, was to associate the college with a university. That has not yet proved possible. but with that exception the temporary abode of the college at the Old Rectory, Hawarden, offers nearly every advantage. This lovely old house was enlarged when it was the Knutsford Test School after the last world war, to take forty students. It is near enough to Liverpool for there to be full co-operation with Professor Simey and the Social Science department of that university, so that on the side of social studies the college is fortunately served. Next door is one of the finest theological libraries in the country, St. Deiniol's Library, to which students have access, and whose warden, Dr. A. R. Vidler, helps the Principal in the direction of studies and in the teaching. The college offers a two year

course in theology closely related to the study of society; and a one year course mainly for social workers and for teachers who want a special course in theology. At present there is only accommodation for women, but as the Archbishop hinted it may be possible to develop the college for men and women. Short courses at various times of the year will be arranged to meet the needs of different types of social workers, men and women, and there is room also for those who want a long period of study for the Lambeth Diploma in Theology. It ought to be, in fact it *is*, an exciting experiment in giving a sound theological training to *lay* people, and to help to reverse the process by which the study of theology has come to be regarded as solely a part of training for the ordained ministry. While many people are deploring the lack of relationship in many universities between theology and other studies, here is a place where a real integration is taking place between theology and the youngest and perhaps the most explosive of the sciences, the study of man in society. The going is not easy: the college is not yet well known, and has no endowments, and early days even if exciting are always hard days.

DR. HENDRIK KRAEMER

Dr. Hendrik Kraemer is now on a visit to this country. He is known to some of our readers as the author of what has now become a classic of missionary thinking, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World.* Others will remember his courageous leadership of the Dutch Churches during the time of Nazi occupation of which a detailed account was given in C.N-L. No. 266. Dr. Kraemer has now left his chair in Leiden University in order to become director of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey near Geneva. The real significance of this appointment is that a man with an unusual insight into the condition of the Church in the modern world and of the difficulties both within and without which hamper its effectiveness, is now released from all other demands and set free to use his remarkable gifts for the service of us all.

One of the things which Dr. Kraemer constantly points out (and he does it with an incisiveness compounded with

such wit and sympathy that none can fail to take his point) is the yawning gulf between the lip service paid by the Churches in their assemblies to certain key ideas and their practice in doing anything about them. At the present moment seemingly no report can be published or utterance made without some reference to the importance of the layman—but the machinery of the Church goes on in just the same way. Few men know more than Dr. Kraemer about the drawing together in many countries of Christian laymen to discuss their duty in the secular order. Yet, he says, they are hampered and crippled by their lack of theological insights. They do not understand what theologians write, or if they do, they see no point of connection between it and the problems of the life they live. They have a vague, uneasy feeling that the authority of the Bible as the Christian's handbook of daily living is not what it used to be, and they are conscious that many of the complexities of modern life have no counterpart in Biblical history, and that a great act of interpretation of the Bible is needed. There cannot be, in Dr. Kraemer's view, any bridging of this gap between the active Christian laymen who soon get led into bypaths of unprofitable activism for lack of genuine theological understanding and the theologians restlessly active in an intellectual field of their own, until there are laymen who know on their pulses the problems and pressures of our time and who also, though they cannot possess a heavy weight of theological learning, have at least acquired theological insights, the capacity to look at their own practical world with eyes trained to see by theological perspectives.

This is the task which Dr. Kraemer has set himself, and as the work at Bossey develops we hope to be able to tell our readers more of it.

A fair share of time at the Amsterdam Assembly of the World Council of Churches is to be given to the discussion of topics suggested by the constituent Churches as matters on which they would like an ecumenical exchange of views. From a large number of topics, four for which the greatest demand was expressed have been selected. Two at least of these are subjects of which, as Dr. Kraemer says, the

Churches are constantly saying "How important!" and doing very little. One is the place of laymen, and the other the place of women in the Church. On the latter the World Council has been conducting for two years an international survey which will be published before the Assembly.

THE SUPPLEMENT

The last number of the News-Letter contained a Supplement on Middleton Murry's *The Free Society* by Donald MacKinnon. The issues which the book raises are too important for any one Supplement to do more than open up one half of a dialectic, and we planned that another Supplement should be published in this number. But we have received, with permission to publish, a letter from Czechoslovakia, where the matters on which Mr. Murry wrote have come to a point where men have to make terrible decisions. Dr. Hromadka is Dean of the Jan Huss Faculty in the University of Prague; he describes his position and how he reached it, and he confesses with complete frankness that many fellow Christians whom he deeply respects do not agree with him and deplore his action. But it is not just that Christians have to agree to differ over politics. Far more is at stake than individual men's opinions and lives, because these are times of revolution. A new society is being born in Europe. Nobody knows what it will be, and many people simply cannot bring themselves to recognize the fact of fundamental change. It is against such blindness that Dr. Hromadka is reacting, not only in words but in political action. Other men equally sincere and equally aware of what possibilities for society and for the Church the present situation holds know that there is immense danger of the Christian conscience coming to acquiesce in, and become reconciled to, courses that are the very work of Satan. In these terribly difficult choices, the nature of which it is difficult for us in this country even to imagine, each man has to decide in the light of his own conscience. It is a great test of the bond of Christian love, whether at such times as these men whom everything else divides can still speak to each other in the Christian fellowship.

The second Supplement on *The Free Society* will appear in the next issue.

Kathleen Bliss

BETWEEN YESTERDAY AND TO-MORROW

BY JOSEF L. HROMADKA

THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND

It may now be said that the week of February 20th–27th, 1948, was a deep break in the national life of Czechoslovakia. The people of that democratic country were confronted with more than a mere political crisis. What they have gone through is a real social and political revolution with all its implications and repercussions. The more clearly you realize the depth and dimensions of the revolutionary changes in Czechoslovakia, the more adequately you will be in a position to understand some of their disturbing aspects, and the less confused you will be by what is more or less irrelevant.

The restoration of the Czechoslovak independence on the ruins of the old Austro-Hungarian monarchy in 1918 did not change the structure of our social life. The ground of all Europe was, to be sure, vibrating, and an attentive ear would have heard the cracking in the very foundations of the decaying civilization. However, the way of life went on without any profound change. The social stratification was, then, only slightly modified by the political advance of the working class.

May of 1945 brought a much deeper transformation into our society. The Hitlerian counter-revolution had undermined, morally and politically, culturally and economically, the old civilized order, and had compromised a large part of the old bourgeoisie which was all too ready to listen to the anti-communist crusade of the Nazi leaders. The war, by its very nature, prompted radical socialist aspirations. The victory of the Soviet Union made the communist parties the best prepared and the most powerful organizers of the working masses. And yet, there was also left after the World War II some chance for a progressive, forward-working, non-socialist party to survive and to participate in the rehabilitation of the national life.

The February events of 1948 brought to the end any such chance. The Czechoslovak bourgeoisie, even with its very pro-

gressive section, has ceased to exist as a politically active and creative factor. In 1848, the Czechoslovak young bourgeoisie started its remarkable career. In 1948 a weary, decadent bourgeoisie broke down. The Communists and the radical Socialists may have been ruthless and unscrupulous, but they knew what they wanted and what was to be done. This cannot be said of the other parties. I shall never forget what the late Jan Masaryk, about five or six weeks before the fateful February events, told me. " The trouble is," he said in the course of our talks about the then almost unbearable internal political tension, " the trouble is that the Communists know exactly what they want, are wonderfully organized, and have always been hard working people. Whereas the rest of us do not know what to want and what to do." The way in which the February crisis was precipitated appeared then, and appears still more to-day, to have been pitifully clumsy and amateurish.

I am not ready to slander and to cast contempt upon anybody, but this much must be stressed: if you interpret the Czechoslovak crisis merely as Soviet expansion or a communist machination ignoring the other side of the picture, namely the political helplessness and the lack of a constructive programme on the part of the Czechoslovak bourgeoisie, you can hardly grasp the meaning of what happened in February. My own sincere hope and desire was that we should succeed in preserving Czechoslovakia as a kind of meeting place where the best and the most creative elements of the East and the West would come together and construct a common ground of co-operation. That was, I suspect, the guiding idea of President Benes's statemanship. He knew—long before Munich—that any European peace and order could be established and preserved only on one condition: that the Soviet Union and the communist parties be accepted as equal co-workers and co-builders of the future Europe. Now, Czechoslovakia has become part and parcel of the Eastern orbit, and is speedily walking in the direction of a socialist state. Until February, the country was a partly socialist, partly liberal democracy. At the present moment, it is a socialist democracy. I use deliberately the term " democracy ", although my Western friends may object to this word in this connection. I even now maintain that our Czechoslovak mission remains to be a country

where the democratic freedoms and civil rights grow on the broadest socialistic basis to be a country which might bring together all that is great both in Western and Eastern Europe. Many a friend, reading this proclamation, will undoubtedly smile or shrug his shoulders at the naïveté of my illusions. And yet, I mean it earnestly, although few observers see the perils and dangers of the present situation more than I do.

A word should be said about the international situation as one of the factors which are responsible for the Czechoslovak revolutionary change. Without the terrific tensions between the Western and Eastern block, the transformation of the Czechoslovak life would have—in all probability—proceeded more smoothly and more gradually. The present conflict between the West and the East being as it is, rather growing in intensity than subsiding, the Czechoslovak internal situation could not escape a radical change. Many of us had expected its coming a little later. I have got to remind our Western friends of the fact that under the given international circumstances it was, in the end, well-nigh impossible to resolve the increasing tension between the political groups in my country without a sort of earthquake. How could we? The anti-communist groups were politically and morally incapable of coping with the situation. No thoughtful and intelligent man in Czechoslovakia dare propose any solution that might be interpreted as anti-Soviet. The Czechoslovak people cannot go back beyond Munich and base their national destiny on anything that would ignore the Soviet Union. If the Czechoslovak citizens were asked a single question, whether they would be ready to risk the indifference of the Soviet-Russia as to the national security of their country, the vast majority of them would say a definite "No". The tragedy of Munich has become an open wound of our historical life.

The weakness of the anti-communist groups was due also to the fact that a common man in my country may dislike the Communists and distrust the Soviet Russia, but he would hesitate to entrust the security of his nation to the parties which might erect a barrier between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. Even if the Czechoslovak anti-Communists had proved capable of side-tracking for a moment the Communists and

forming a government without them, they would have created such an internal chaos, such an unrest in the very mind of the people that the country would have fallen into an irreparable confusion and disaster. It so happened that the Communists and the Radical Socialists (also within the Catholic People's Party) represent not only the socially and economically most vigorous tendencies in our society, but also the cause of the national security which without the Soviet Union appears to be on shaky ground.

We also ought to keep in mind that the indignation of the West about what is going on in our country has not a very strong moral appeal to our citizens. How many of those who are criticizing and condemning our present political regime, were rather patient and tolerant to the pre-war anti-communist dictatorships in the area of the present " people's democracies " !

CZECHOSLOVAK CHRISTIANS IN THE REVOLUTION

This is, however, just one side of the picture. What about the Christians in Czechoslovakia ? How have they reacted to the February events ? It is scarcely possible to answer these questions in a clear way. For the time being, the Churches have not been directly affected. There has not been any anti-religious or anti-church propaganda. " The Free-Thought " movement, which used to be closely associated with socialism, is almost non-existent. And yet, every clearly thinking Christian has come to realize that the days ahead of us may be the most serious days of our spiritual history. Here we stand, facing a situation which is not to our liking, which came about against our wishes and expectations, which, however, is here as a reality. We cannot afford to deal with it according to the simplified and easy formulae of anti-totalitarianism and anti-communism. We have got to understand it much more adequately and much more constructively. The events of our present history go far beyond the analogy of Nazism and Communism. Using this analogy quite a few of our friends from abroad are trying to offer us a recipe of what we ought to do. There may be some common elements and aspects shared by both Nazism and Communism, but the constant " analogizing " and the ready-made pills do not work and do not help. The situation is as serious and difficult as it is

precisely because it is different from the situation under a Nazi regime. If we dare to proclaim a single "No" to the present state of affairs, everything would be more simple and easy. But this is exactly what we cannot, and must not, do.

Now, I have got to pause and make clear one point: what I just said is my personal opinion. It has often been criticized, and even contradicted by my very good friends. The Church I belong to is socially and politically rather conservative; conservative if we look at it from the perspective of the present history. A large number of my brethren feel rather disturbed. And rightly so. Most of them are members of the class that is at the end of its historical mission. To-day, two months after the February revolution, you can see, and almost touch with your fingers, the process of the liquidation of what you call bourgeoisie: without insolence, blood and corpses, and yet very real. I know what I am talking about since I am very closely connected with the groups which are losing their old economic security, prestige, glamour and comfort. They realize the change without understanding its deeper historical meaning. Some of them insist that it is just a temporary mishap and misfortune which will pass before long with the change of government. Many of them, however, are aware of the permanent nature of what is going on and feel helpless, hanging in the air, insecure, and hostile to the regime. Only very few understand the historical meaning of the February crisis and try to arrive at a creative readjustment to the social process.

Furthermore, with the fall of the bourgeoisie, some precious values of bourgeois culture are getting lost: some moral standards, social conventions of decency, punctuality, politeness, personal correctness, honesty, decorativeness and refinement. Life is getting—partly because of the terrific wounds suffered during the Nazi occupation, partly because of the revolutionary process—more raw, crude, formless. The bourgeoisie of the nineteenth century, being indifferent in regard to the ultimate issues of human life, created an atmosphere of tolerance, freedom, indulgence; now it is exactly this atmosphere that is gradually fading away. How disturbing!

The prevalent majority of the rank and file Protestants in my country are undergoing a painful shock, and a very hard time either of confession or of readjustment. Likewise the men and women who are ready to deal with the situation from the perspective of faith and theology are finding themselves in an attitude either of negation or of very severe criticism. Some of them say " No ", or take their new situation as a judgment of the divine wrath. Some of them, again, interpret the February events as a divine warning and challenge to withdraw from the " labyrinth of the world " into the sanctuary of faith and theology. The number of those who are ready to accept the situation without reservation is negligible. What a variety of attitudes and reactions !

My personal attitude differs from all of them. I accept the February change as a step in the unavoidable and justifiable process of the social transformation of our life. The whole post-war life of Europe in general, and of Central and Eastern Europe in particular, is so fluid and abnormal that any effort to analyse it only from the perspective of a normal democratic process will prove to be inadequate and arbitrary. Let me, again, repeat what I said a moment ago : I do not believe that the anti-communist mood now prevalent in Western countries is capable of understanding the real issue of the present times. Furthermore, I resent the way in which so many conservative and even reactionary (I apologize for using the word " reactionary ") elements have been assisted in the name of formal democracy. However, my attitude to the present regime is not that of an adaptation and self-identification. The centre of gravity of my own life and position is on another plane to that of the present masters of Czechoslovakia. The perspective of my political decision essentially differs from the perspective of Communism. However, I believe that the social and economic transformation of our life along the lines of Socialism cannot be " contained " and halted. Any effort to halt it is based on a wrong historical judgment, on an inadequate insight into the process of our times, and is heaping perilous explosive forces under the foundations of our life. Unfortunately, I do not see any chance to carry out the socialization of our society without, or even against, the communistic parties as they have been

organized during the last thirty years. Communism is partly an heir of the age-long craving for social justice and equality, partly a child of the errors, blindness and greediness of the decadent bourgeois society. I am finding myself, at least for a moment, where the communist parties are carrying on their historical mission. The path of my faith and the path of the communist activity intersect one another, but they are not identical, they are of an essentially different nature.

Hence, I do not feel depressed. I am sick of the continuous grumbling of the helpless and emasculated, anti-communist complaining and whining flowing from so many, otherwise decent and nice, Christians. My faith does not allow me to withdraw into the holy of holies of my innermost inwardness. I do believe that my place is, precisely at the present moment, on the spot of the most essential changes of my country, where the burning lava of history can be directed and shaped by what we believe is the highest criterion of our life. I may be wrong in the analysis and understanding of the present times. As a matter of fact, I may be walking on the edge of an abyss ; one wrong step, and the fall will ensue with a terrific logic. And yet, the Christian witness has got to be carried on where there is no security.

On the 25th February (on *the* day of the February revolution) a group of my best friends and comrades came to see me and to tell me that they had ceased to trust my judgment and to follow my leadership. We had a long talk. It was one of the most dramatic moments of my life. Two days later, one of them, a man whom I deeply respect and love, came to see me again and said, " I am now much calmer than the day before yesterday. I still believe that there is nothing else to be done than to withdraw from public life and devote one's own energy to a deeper study of the Bible and to a more vigorous witness of our faith. Nevertheless, I am certain that both of us, you and I, are standing on the same ground of faith and theology. You may be wrong in your political judgment and in the way in which you interpret the present events, and I may be right. Or vice versa : you may be right, and I may be wrong. As long as we admit the limitations and weakness of our judgment, and as long as we bow our heads before the same ultimate tribunal we are one in spite of our

differences." That was approximately his pronouncement—and my mind and heart responded in the same spirit.

My present position was prepared by a long study of T. J. Masaryk's profound analysis of the moral, spiritual and social decay of what we call the modern man and the liberal capitalist society. His understanding of the present times as a great "world revolution" has helped me to approach the social and economic unrest without fear and anxiety. In the same manner my theology—based on the Biblical testimony of the real presence of the Crucified and Risen in the deepest depth of human misery, and of His ultimate victory at the end of time—has assisted me in my theological effort to keep my faith free from any self-identification with our social or cultural order, free also from the Western civilization which I greatly cherish and love. Yes, indeed, I may be wrong. The communist-controlled regime may, with a sinister inner logic, drive our life into the straight-jacket of a police state and a totalitarian system. However, I believe in the possibility of another alternative: that the Christian heritage and witness may prove to be a transforming power and keep the new socialist or communist order free from spiritual stagnation and impotence.

The days ahead of us will, in all probability, be very difficult and pregnant with many perils and dangers. Every day brings a new situation, new hopes and new clouds. Every day we have to pray for wisdom, providence and courage. The Church of Christ must not keep herself behind the Maginot-line of defence. She has to carry on her witness and struggle precisely on the spot of the greatest danger. Some of us may withdraw from the public life; some of us must withdraw, and dedicate our lives to the innermost sanctuary of faith and theology. There are others, however, who have got to stand at the point where—through the Divine providence and judgment—the most dynamic historical forces and the witness of the Church meet and intersect one another. It may so happen that the days to come will involve us in what we call an existential struggle, a struggle for the ultimate issues of life and faith. The era of liberal bourgeoisie with its indifference, neutrality and tolerant indulgence is over. The present rulers have a definite and aggressive *Weltanschaung*,

even if they refrain from an attack upon the Church and religion. Our faith and Christianity will—humanly speaking—prevail only under two conditions (1) that they carry their witness without trying to be a reservoir and stronghold of the old social and economic order, and (2) that they are really based on the realities of the prophetic and apostolic message and know what the Crucifixion and Resurrection of the Incarnate Word of God are. It will be a life and death struggle. If the Church becomes a real confessing Church, she will not only be a rallying point of all who have found a way out of confusion and despair, but she will save from materialist corruption the noble aspirations of the new order. It is a time of great perils as well as of great hopes.

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